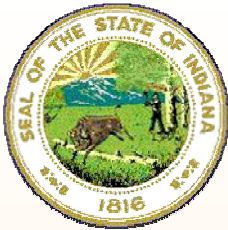


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Dear Friends:

The first regular session of the 114th Indiana General Assembly contained both accomplishments and disappointments for all Hoosiers. The most important issue considered this year was the establishment of a new state budget for the next two years. Contained in House Enrolled Act 1001, the \$24.3 billion appropriations plan will purportedly balance the state's budget without increasing any statewide taxes. However, the budget raises property taxes significantly and does not adequately fund education.

One reason I voted against this budget is because it cuts funding to 142 school corporations across the state, while it potentially raises local property taxes by as much as \$850 million and simultaneously places a freeze on state property tax relief.

Under the budget's new school funding formula, only one percent of additional funding is provided for schools in the first year of the biennium and 1.1 percent in the second. This is well short of the 2.75 percent schools will need to keep up with inflation and the costs associated with enrollment growth.

This budget and school funding formula will mean laying off thousands of teachers, larger class sizes, fewer opportunities for expanded curriculums and less of a chance for our public schools to cope with the burden of unfunded state and federal mandates that are continually placed on them.

The budget also fails to adequately fund state universities, which in turn will cause tuition costs to rise. It underfunds the projected growth in Medicaid costs and reduces funding dedicated to local communities for road improvements.

Although I was very disappointed with the outcome of the state budget, several important initiatives were enacted and are discussed inside this newsletter. If I can provide you with more information on issues considered by the legislature or assist you with problems or concerns you have relating to state government, please feel free to contact me. I look forward to hearing from you.

Jim Lewis

What time is it ? Daylight Saving Time passes

This year the General Assembly passed legislation requiring all of Indiana to observe Daylight Saving Time.

Daylight Saving Time is the practice of setting clocks forward one hour ahead of the standard time at 2 a.m. on the first Sunday of April and moving the clock back an hour on the last Sunday of October. The purpose of Daylight Saving Time is to adjust work and school hours to summer's longer days.

The General Assembly cannot change Time Zones. Only the U.S. Department of Transportation can move Indiana to the Central or Eastern Time Zone.

In the classroom

HEA 1001 includes a provision that changes the age cutoff date for kindergarten enrollment from July 1 to August 1. Beginning in 2006, children who are age five on or before August 1 will be able to enroll in kindergarten.

Beginning with the 2010-2011 school year, **SEA 200** provides that all students entering high

school will be required to take the Core 40 curriculum. This includes additional math and science classes that will be required course work to be admitted to a state-operated four-year college or university. Students would be allowed to

opt out of Core 40 with parental permission and obtain a general diploma.

Maintaining a safe and productive environment in Indiana schools is addressed under **SEA 285**. The bill combats school violence and

will help educators identify and prevent bullying. This act legally defines bullying as repeated hostile acts over

a period of time, requires that all Indiana school corporations implement safe-school committees and provides statewide training opportunities to help teachers and administrators prevent and intervene in bullying situations.



At the polls

Changes to Indiana's election laws

Several changes were made to Indiana's election laws that will be in effect for the next election in May 2006.

More restrictions on absentee voting have been put in place under **SEA 15**. The bill provides that when applying for an absentee ballot, voters will have to state the specific reason for voting absentee and have a reasonable expectation of being unable to vote during the entire twelve hours the polls are open.

Under **SEA 483**, voters will now be required to show government-issued photo identification to be allowed to vote. If a voter cannot produce identification at the polls, they may vote a provisional ballot, which is a ballot that is set aside and may be counted as long as proper procedures are followed. To have the provisional ballot counted, the voter must appear be-

fore the county election board before the Monday following the election and present proper identification. If the voter does not have an accepted photo ID because the voter is indigent, the voter can sign a document attesting to this and have their ballot counted. However, if the voter does not provide the appropriate documentation to the county election board, the provisional ballot will not be accepted. The ID requirement is waived for nursing home residents who vote at a polling place within the nursing home.

SEA 483 also requires the Bureau of Motor Vehicles to provide a free ID card to an individual who does not have a drivers license and will be 18 years old by the next election. **HEA 1407** requires all full-service license branches to be open on the day before an election and on election day to issue drivers licenses and ID cards to ensure voters are able to obtain proper identification.

Under **SEA 419**, military and overseas voters will be able to email their ballots through a program being administered by the U.S. Department of Defense. These voters will also be able to submit a single application by fax that would serve as both voter registration and an absentee ballot application.

Valid identification includes a state issued drivers license, an ID card issued to those who do not drive, a passport or a military identification. No alternative forms of ID will be accepted.

Economic Development

Lawmakers spur economic development efforts

As we work to strengthen Indiana's economy and create new, good-paying jobs, much of the focus of this legislative session was directed at modernizing the state's economic development efforts.

One of the first actions taken by the General Assembly was passage of **HEA 1003** which created the Indiana Economic Development Corporation. This new public-private partnership replaces the Indiana Department of Commerce as the state's lead economic development agency and will provide the state with more flexibility in attracting and retaining business.

At the same time, several other new state agencies were created to support important aspects of the state's overall economic agenda including the Department of Tourism, the Department of Agriculture, the Office of Rural



Affairs and the Office of Community Development.

Action was also taken to add new tools to the state's economic development toolbox. Among the many initiatives approved was legislation to allow counties to join forces to compete for economic development projects, the establishment of Global Commerce Centers to help Hoosier businesses better compete internationally, the streamlining of worker training pro-

grams, the expansion of several research and development tax credits as well as the reauthorization of various state and local job creation incentives.

Indiana is home to some of the largest insurance, pharmaceutical and manufacturing companies in the nation.

Lewis' initiatives become law

Several of my key initiatives have been signed into law by the governor. A few of these include:

★ **SEA 66** prohibits the Office of Medicaid Policy or the office's managed care contractor from providing incentives or mandates that direct certain individuals to specified hospitals other than the hospital located in the city where the patient resides.

★ **SEA 296** increases access to the state's community college system by broadening the mission of Ivy Tech State College. The bill changes the name of the institution to Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana and authorizes the college to offer an extended curriculum to include courses related to general education, liberal arts and occupational and technical education.

★ **SEA 304** exempts spouses and children of the Indiana National Guard who are killed while on active duty from payment of tuition and other mandatory fees at the state's colleges and universities.

★ **SEA 332** requires that schools display an American flag in each classroom and allows students time each day to voluntarily recite the Pledge of Allegiance and observe a moment of silence.

★ **SEA 518** clarifies that certain activities of forestry operations are not public or private nuisances and voids any local ordinances making forestry operations a nuisance.

I also authored legislation that was incorporated into **HEA 1580** which prohibits a private employer from disciplining an employee who is a volunteer firefighter or a member of a volunteer emergency medical services association for being late to work when the employee is responding to a fire or an emergency call. In addition, the employer may designate an employee as an essential employee and reject the employee's notification of expected absence.



Senator Lewis discusses legislation on the Senate Floor.



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State Information TDD	800-743-3333	(Washington County)	800-333-2451
Indiana Senate	800-382-9467	Health & Human Services	
Governor's Office	317-232-4567	Senior Health Insurance Help	800-452-4800
Community Action Agency		Long Term Care Complaints	800-246-8909
(Coordinates energy, housing & other assistance for low-income Hoosiers)		Family Health Helpline	800-433-0746
Ohio Valley Opportunities, Inc.		Medicaid Hotline	800-457-4584
(Jennings, Scott & Jefferson counties)	800-928-1232	Medicare Hotline	800-633-4227
Community Action of Southern Indiana		Adult Protective Services	800-992-6978
(Clark County)	812-288-6451	Child Protective Services	800-562-2407
Human Services, Inc (Jackson County)	812-376-9431	Victim Assistance Hotline	800-258-0993
Southeastern Indiana Economic		Consumer Protection	800-382-5516
Opportunity Corp. (Switzerland County)	800-755-8558	No Call List	888-834-9969
Hoosier Uplands (Washington County)	800-333-2451	WorkOne Madison	
Area Agency on Aging		(Jefferson & Switzerland counties)	812-265-3734
(Provides case management, information & referral services for persons who are aging or developmentally disabled)		WorkOne New Albany	
LifeTime Resources, Inc.		(Clark, Scott & Washington counties)	812-948-6102
(Jefferson & Switzerland counties)	800-742-5001	Online Services	
Agency on Aging, Inc		BMV Express	
(Jackson & Jennings counties)	866-644-6407	www.in.gov/bmv/bmvexpress/	
Lifespan Resources, Inc.		Assistance with prescription drugs	
(Clark & Scott counties)	812-948-8330	www.in.gov/fssa/hoosierx/	
		www.rxforindiana.org/	
		Get state forms	
		www.in.gov/icpr/webfile/formsdiv/catchoic.html	